POL 14 VIET-S

INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL

EXCISE

Action 55 Info

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 14295

L I M D I S

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. EMBOFF RECENTLY HAD SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS WITH SEVERAL HOA HAO LEADERS, INCLUDING [redacted] FOLLOWING HOA HAO ATTITUDES EMERGED:

b-1 ed

A. HOA HAO HAVE NOT RPT NOT YET MADE UP THEIR MINDS ABOUT THEIR STRATEGY IN FORTHCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. WHEN MILITARY INTENTIONS ARE CLEARER THEY WILL DECIDE WHICH WAY TO THROW THEIR SUPPORT.

B. ON BALANCE THE HOA HAO PREFER A CIVILIAN PRESIDENT. BUT THEY MAY DECIDE TO SUPPORT A MILITARY CANDIDATE. SAID ONLY TWO IMPORTANT SLATES WILL BE IN THE FIELD: A MILITARY SLATE AND A RELIGIOUS SLATE. HE SAID THE HOA HAO WOULD CONSIDER ONLY LUONG TRONG TUONG AS THEIR OWN CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT, BUT IF TUONG CHOOSES NOT TO RUN, ANOTHER HOA HAO MIGHT RUN FOR VICE PRESIDENT ON ALLIANCE TICKET. [redacted] SAID THAT THE HOA HAO WOULD MOST NATURALLY SEEK ALLIANCES WITH THE CAO DAI, THE CATHOLICS, AND THE VNQDD. HE DID NOT RPT NOT RULE OUT A MILIATRY HOA HAO TICKET, BUT WAS CLEARLY THINKING PRIMARILY OF HOA HAO PARTICIPATION IN A RELIGIOUS TICKET. HE STATED CATEGORICALLY THAT THE HOA HAO WILL NOT RPT NOT MAKE AN ALLIANCE WITH TRI QUANG AND THE MILITANT BUDDHISTS. C. HOWEVER, WE HAVE HEARD FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT TRI QUANG IS INTERESTED IN WORKING WITH AND THROUGH

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REVIEWED BY [redacted] DATE 10/6/81
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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ALLIANCE DEMOCRATIC BLOC SAID THAT ALTHOUGH TRI QUANG WAS DISCREDITED BY HIS ACTIONS IN THE RECENT "STRUGGLE", THE "AN QUANG GROUP" IS STILL THE MOST IMPORTANT BUDDHIST ORGANIZATION. WE ALSO NOTE THAT TRI QUANG WAS LINKED WITH THE FRONT OF ALL RELIGIONS THROUGH PHAP TRI, AND THE FRONT WAS REPRESENTED BY AN "OBSERVER"-FATHER HOANG QUYNH-WHEN THE ALLIANCE DEMOCRATIC BLOC WAS FORMED.)

C. AMONG THE MILITARY CANDIDATES, THE HOA HAO PROBABLY HAVE SOME PREFERENCE FOR THIEU OVER KY.

b-1 ed

TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE HOA HAO REGARD THIEU AS A SOUTHERNER SINCE HIS BIRTHPLACE, PHAN RAFA, IS NOT REALLY CENTRAL VIET NAM AND THIEU HAS A SOUTHERN WIFE. WAS EXTREMELY CRITICAL OF KY BUT WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO SAY GOOD THINGS ABOUT THIEU. WAS AT PAIN TO DENY ANY SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIMSELF AND KY: HE TOLD EMBOFF SEVERAL TIMES THAT HE HAD SERVED IN KY GOVERNMENT AS REPRESENTATIVE OF HOA HAO AND NOT BECAUSE HE WAS CLOSE TO KY.

D. THE HOA HAO PRESENTLY SEEM UNLIKELY TO SUPPORT ANY "OLD POLITICAN" CANDIDATES SUCH AS PHAN QUANG DAN, PHAN KHAC SUU, OR TRAN VAN HUONG. EXPRESSLY DISMISSED SUCH CANDIDATES.

b-1 ed

MADE POINT OF SAYING PHAN KHAC SUU'S TOO OLD AND IN TOO POOR HEALTH TO SERVE AS PRESIDENT.

E. THE HOA HAO ARE WORKING WITH PRESENT REGIME BUT ARE NOT PLEASED WITH IT. SAID THIS IN SO MANY WORDS. WAS BITTERLY CRITICAL OF KY GOVERNMENT, REPEATEDLY AND HEATEDLY STRESSING ALLEGED POPULAR DISTRUST OF KY REGIME.

F. THE HOA HAO ARE GREATLY ATTRACTED BY THE IDEA OF SPECIAL POLITICAL ROLE FOR RELIGIONS. INDICATED A PREFERENCE NOR AN UPPER HOUSE IN THE FUTURE GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD REPRESENT SPECIAL INTERESTS, PARTICULARLY THE RELIGIONS. TALKED AT LENGTH ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF IMPROVING THE VIETNAMESE AMERICAN COOPERATION.

2. SHOWED EMBOFF HANDWRITTEN NOTE FROM DATED MARCH 1966, WHICH GIVES FULL POWER TO DEAL WITH FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVES ON BEHALF OF ENPHASIZED REPEATEDLY HIS CONNECTION WITH HOA HAO AND DISMISSED HIS CONNECTION WITH

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KY. DESPITE THESE STATEMENTS, WE HEAR FROM OTHER DEPUTIES THAT [redacted] SEES A GREAT DEAL OF KY AND IS WORKING WITH HIM. NOT RPT NOT CLEAR WHETHER [redacted] IS ON HOA HAO TEAM, KY TEAM, OR BOTH. PROBABLY HE HAS AMBITIONS TO RUN FOR VICE PRESIDENT.

PORTER

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